

LESSON PLAN 33: CREATE AN ONLINE 'SLIDESHOW' OF READING LISTS

Objective: Organise your book titles into fun, creative and informative categories.

Age range: 8-18

Launched in November, Reading Trails (www.readingtrails.com) offers a new way to organise your book lists – as well as check out what others are reading. It's a bit like a social networking site but with a twist, your connection with others using the site is your use of (and love of) books.



Calling them trails (hence the name, we suspect), the idea is to arrange books into a sequence that links them in a specific way, perhaps a course reading list, writing style, subject matter, age appropriateness, and so on. Obviously, books can be included on many people's trails. Through the site, you can see where other people have chosen the same book, and see how it fits into their trail. It might give you ideas about other books you could include in your list ... or read next.

YOU WILL NEED

Book lists, ideas for 'trails', computer and Internet connection.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Reading, organisation, investigation, creativity, computing, appreciating books.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Encourage students to explore books, genres and other ways they relate to each other. Dealing with book lists. Collecting and organising information. Combining together different types of media, in this case books and the Internet/digital content.



METHOD

1. Talk to your class about the concept of book lists and how they operate. Discuss and identify how books can be linked and categorised.
2. Introduce and explain the Reading Trails website.
3. Before signing up, check out some of the existing trails, which are easily accessible under subject (such as classic literature, poetry, science fiction, philosophy, history, picture books) or author or publisher, etc.

A quick search revealed some lists that may have done the work for you already, such as:

- Great read alouds for age 5-6
- French Existentialism
- Evolutionary biology
- Books I actually liked in High School
- Favourite Classics
- A first year English teacher's journey
- Astronomy books for the middle grades

4. Once you've got the hang of things, sign up and start making your own lists. You could create a trail for a class project, a curriculum reading list, or themed titles (perhaps on a particular historical figure, a country, an activity, an animal, and so on). Then simply give the link to students for them to investigate and follow.

Alternatively, get students to review subjects and create their own trails – you could ask them to explain how and why they chose to include particular books. They could also explore trails created by other people and where their trails intersect.

5. If you're feeling adventurous, you can add trails (yours or others') to your website or blog. This is a great way to share book lists with students and/or colleagues, or to showcase books related to your area(s) of interest. Simply download the widget from the Reading Trails website (www.readingtrails.com/tour.php#widgets).

Or, if you've made a trail, or found one you want to share, click the 'Share' link and enter friends' email addresses to send it to them.

6. The site also has what it calls 'Open Trails'. These are a community effort – any member can add books and book descriptions.

Overall, a tool like Reading Trails looks like a fun and interesting way to approach dealing with books and written resources in the classroom. It adds a new dimension to following reading lists, writing reviews, and exploring the world of literature.

Students can share what they're reading, with others in the class, through the school and further afield. It's another online opportunity to have an authentic audience for their work and ideas.